

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Status of the Application

Claims 1 - 18 are presently pending in the application. Applicants amend claims 1 - 18. No new matter is added. Support may be found, for example, at page 16, lines 18 -24, and page 21, line 11 through page 25, line 25 of Applicants' specification, and with reference to Applicants' FIGs. 1 and 7 - 11.

Objection to Drawing

The drawing is objected to under 37 C.F.R. § 1.83(a) as failing to show every feature specified in the claims. Specifically, the Examiner finds that the claimed "parallel direction" and "vertical direction" in claims 1 - 3, 5 - 7, 9 - 14 and 17 are not shown in the drawing. Applicants amend these terms to recite, respectively, "a first axis that is substantially parallel to an anteroposterior axis of a wearer, and a second axis which is perpendicular to the first axis" (emphasis added). The first axis, for example, is illustrated as the "longitudinal axis" of FIG. 1, and the second axis is illustrated, for example, as the "lateral axis" of FIG. 1. Applicants therefore submit that the amended claim terms are shown in the drawing, and respectfully request that the objection be withdrawn.

Claim Objection

Claim 12 is objected to in regard to informalities. Specifically, the Examiner finds that the claim term "prescribed angle between said parallel direction" (emphasis added) is unclear. Applicants amend claim 12 to replace this claim term with the term "prescribed angle to the first

axis” (emphasis added). Applicants respectfully submit that this terminology is clear, and request that the objection be withdrawn.

Claims Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1 - 18 are rejected under the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. § 112 as being indefinite with respect to usage of the terms “parallel direction” and “vertical direction.” The Examiner interprets “parallel direction” to include both the longitudinal and transverse directions, thereby finds this term to be indefinite. As described above, Applicants amend the terms parallel direction and vertical direction as used in claims 1 - 3, 5 - 7, 9 - 14 and 17 to respectively recite “a first axis that is substantially parallel to an anteroposterior axis of a wearer, and a second axis which is perpendicular to the first axis.” Applicants submit that the amended terms are not indefinite, and respectfully request that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claims Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103

Claims 1 - 18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,197,959 to Buell. Applicants amend claims 1 - 18 to better clarify the nature of their invention, and respectfully traverse this rejection.

In amended independent claim 1, for example, Applicants claim:

1. An interlabial pad with a size, weight, and flexibility capable of being held between labia by pinching a part or the whole portion of the interlabial pad naturally therebetween, having a first axis that is substantially parallel to an

anteroposterior axis of a wearer, and a second axis which is perpendicular to the first axis, further comprising,

an absorbent body for absorbing body fluid and

a coating material for enclosing the absorbent body, which defines a main form of the interlabial pad, wherein:

the absorbent body includes one or a plurality of bending elements including a slit formed with a prescribed length and depth, the bending elements provided in a prescribed position of the interlabial pad and formed of a part with a smaller bending strength compared to parts other than the prescribed position.

(Emphasis added)

Buell discloses an absorbent article having a deformation element 20 with a plurality of straight and curved flexure hinges 23A, 23B and 23C (i.e., portions with a reduced bending resistance). *See* col. 13, lines 8-29 and Fig. 6. The deformation element 20 of Buell is positioned below the absorbent core, and is preferably liquid impermeable. *See* Col. 12, lines 43-50. In sharp contrast to the flexure hinges of Buell, Applicants claim bending elements that are formed within the absorbent body, and in particular, are formed as slits having a prescribed length and depth. *See* Applicants Figs. 6 and 7. Applicants claimed approach provides an advantage over the absorbent article of Buell by eliminating an additional element of the article (i.e., the deformation element 20).

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that as Buell fails to disclose Applicants' claimed absorbent body of amended independent claim 1 including a plurality of bending elements formed, at least one of which is formed as slit of prescribed length and depth, amended independent claim 1 is not anticipated by Buell and stands in condition for allowance. Applicants reapply these arguments to amended independent claim 17, which includes the same limitations as amended independent claim 1 with regard to bending elements formed in the absorbent body, and thereby submit that amended independent claim 17 is also allowable. As dependent claims 2 - 16 and 18 each depend from one of allowable claims 1 and 17, Applicants further submit that claims 2 - 16 and 18 are also allowable for at least this reason.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendments, Applicants believe the pending application is in condition for allowance. If there are any remaining issues which the Examiner believes could be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below.

Dated: May 22, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

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